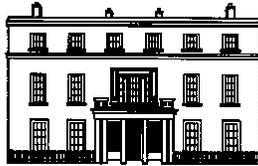


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Home Economics
REPORT

Presentation Secondary School
Listowel, County Kerry
Roll number: 61380H

Date of inspection: 8 October 2015



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HOME ECONOMICS**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	7 and 8 October, 2015
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Provision and support for Home Economics is of a high quality.
- Subject uptake levels are strong, and a high percentage of students successfully study Home Economics at higher levels.
- Review informs the preparation of an annual action plan, although this plan could be further informed by student surveys.
- An extremely positive emerging emphasis on the promotion of self and peer assessment was noted and this is further encouraged.
- Teaching and learning was of a consistently high quality in observed lessons.
- Lessons were highly student-centred, with a variety of participation requirements placed on students.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- As has been identified in the subject department's 2015-2016 action plan, the further development of programmes of work should be prioritised.
- The incorporation of a variety of cooperative learning strategies is recommended, along with an exploration of classroom layouts that would be more accommodating of this approach.
- As deemed appropriate, and in response to students' increased confidence and improved capacity, it is recommended that students be further empowered in practical food studies lessons to work in a more self-directed and independent manner.

INTRODUCTION

Presentation Secondary School, Listowel is an all-girls, voluntary secondary school. Current enrolment is 311. Following the Junior Certificate examination, students may opt for the Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) or the established Leaving Certificate programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning was of a consistently high quality in observed lessons.
- Teachers' approach to lesson design and delivery was quite similar. This suggests that discussions relative to best practice and lesson structure have taken place, and that an overarching approach to this was agreed. This is most positive.
- Lessons commenced with the good practice of sharing the plan for the lesson with students. The emphasis at this point was on content to be covered rather than intended learning. It was suggested to teachers that when establishing and sharing the lesson plan with students, consideration ought to be given to the knowledge, understanding, skills and, as relevant, the attitudes and values, to be garnered, developed or influenced.
- Teachers' inputs were very clear and highly informed. On occasion, it was suggested that students might be asked more and told less, as deemed appropriate.
- There was a positive emphasis in lessons on supporting and checking student learning, with teachers going to great lengths to teach for understanding. In this regard, live samples, mnemonics, rubrics, and considered questioning were very well utilised.
- It was noted that, at times, students were reluctant to respond to questions. The introduction of strategies designed to get maximum student engagement and participation should be considered. These strategies might include: think-pair-share, buzz groups, pair checking, telegraphing, all-student response systems and mini whiteboards.
- A very structured, emphasis on keywords in lessons was well utilised to introduce and highlight important, topic-specific concepts. A keyword approach to note-taking was also observed.
- Lessons were highly student-centred, with a variety of participation requirements placed on students.
- It was positive that students were facilitated to work collaboratively. Such pair or group activities were carefully planned, well organised and managed, closely monitored and thoroughly processed. The incorporation of a greater variety of cooperative learning strategies is recommended. This could include strategies such as placemat, jigsaw, round robin, snowball, to name but a few.
- In tandem with the recommendation provided in the previous point, teachers are strongly encouraged to explore the 'deconstruction' of the traditional classroom layout, with a view to creating learning centres at which cooperative learning might be better supported.
- Practical, food-studies lessons were successfully executed, with equal emphasis being placed on both process and product. In these lessons due attention was paid to best practice principles and proper procedure in the areas of food preparation and cooking. As deemed appropriate, and in response to students' increased confidence and improved

capacity, it is recommended, that students be further empowered in practical food studies lessons to work in a more self-directed and independent manner.

- Independent learning and research skills were promoted and supported both in lessons and in well-chosen, follow-up homework activities.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision and support for Home Economics is of a high quality.
- It is offered on all curricular programmes. In addition, the Hotel Catering Tourism (HCT) vocational specialism is provided in LCA. Home Economics is compulsory in both first year and TY, and this supports informed subject choice.
- Subject uptake levels are strong, with the number of students studying Home Economics for both certificate examinations exceeding national trends. A high percentage of students successfully study the subject at higher levels.
- Timetabling is fair and appropriate, and management is largely considerate of teachers' timetabling requests. Deployment of teachers supports continuity and rotation. The possibility of team teaching is suggested as an area for exploration.
- Teachers' engagement with continuous professional development opportunities is substantial.
- The subject department has agreed an assessment policy that is cognisant of all examinable components of syllabuses. The recent introduction of rubrics in practical, food studies lessons is a positive step toward the promotion of informed self and peer assessment. This, as well as other similarly focused strategies, is further encouraged.
- Students' folders and copybooks, especially those relating to third-year, fifth-year and sixth-year students, demonstrate that teachers provide high quality formative feedback to students. The need to increase the provision of such comment on first-year and second-year work, together with more formal marking and grading of student work, was highlighted.
- Review and evaluation skills are fostered in students from first year.
- Subject-specific health and safety reviews are regular, and these find their basis in the desirable hazard analysis and risk assessment approach.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation is very good.
- All the desirable support structures for subject department planning are in place, and related work is well progressed. The school's learning and teaching committee commendably inform agendas for meetings. A strong tradition of minuting meetings is evident, alongside a systematic filing of related documentation. A coordinator oversees this work. Ideally, this position should be rotated and therefore it would be best that it be disassociated with post-holder duties.
- A subject plan is in place, and this clearly documents up-to-date information relating to provision, curriculum planning, and assessment.

- Curriculum documentation includes outline programmes of work for all courses and all relevant class groups. Corresponding resource files are also in place. The subject department's 2015-2016 action plan indicates that the further development of junior and senior cycle programmes of work will be prioritised. This is fully encouraged. The approach adopted should support and promote further teacher discussion and sharing of approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment.
- The TY programme includes a commendably strong emphasis on the assessment of student learning.
- Review is a firmly embedded practice. The preparation of the previously referenced annual action plan is particularly commended, as is the preparation of an annual report. It is positive that surveys are administered to students regularly. A deeper analysis of such surveys was recommended. Particular attention ought to be paid to what students have to say about practical food studies, activities that help them learn, and suggested changes or improvements.
- There was evidence of a considerable amount of planning for co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- Planning and preparation for individual lessons was of a high quality. The preparation and sourcing of high quality resources merits a particular mention.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wished to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Presentation Secondary School welcomes the comprehensive and positive report on the Quality of Teaching and Learning in Home Economics and is pleased that the report recognises the following:

- ❖ Provision and support for Home Economics is of a high quality.
- ❖ Teaching and learning was of a consistently high quality in observed lessons.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Board is happy to report that management and teachers in the Home Economics Department are taking the necessary steps to implement the recommendations which, in the view of the Board will further enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the subject.